

Directorate of Intelligence

To :

From

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As so often happens,
a good response engenders
more questions.

Can you respond to
this follow-up query?

I've also sent a
copy to the NID staff
who provided answers
for the earlier request.

Thank you.

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NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD

NFAC-6524

Memorandum for Holders-1 of
NFIB-14.2/8

30 September 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR HOLDERS-1 OF NFIB-14.2/8

FROM : Walter Elder
Secretary

SUBJECT : Dissenting Positions in National Intelligence Estimates
and Memorandums

REFERENCE : NFIB-14.2/8, 10 July 1980

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The attached memoranda are forwarded for your information.

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Walter Elder
WALTER ELDER

Attachments
A/S

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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment

Attachment to
Memorandum for Holders-1 of
NFIB-14.2/8
30 September 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: National Foreign Intelligence Board

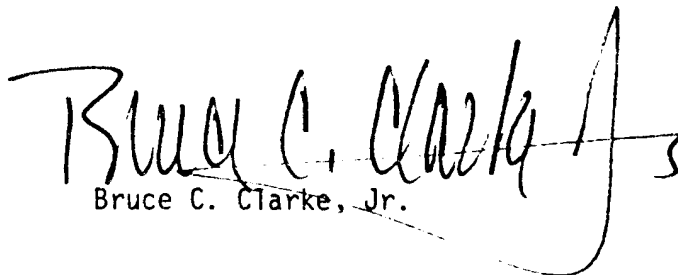
FROM : Bruce C. Clarke, Jr.
Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment

SUBJECT : Dissenting Positions in National Intelligence Estimates
and Memorandums

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Attached is the final version of the DCI's guidelines on dissenting positions in NIEs. We received comments from a number of you and have adjusted the text to reflect most if not all of your problems. In particular, let it be understood that NIOs will not unilaterally change dissenting language that reflects the personal positions of NFIB principals.

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Bruce C. Clarke, Jr.

Attachment
(15 September 1980)

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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

Attachment to
Memorandum for Holders-1 of
NFIB-14.2/8
30 September 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: Members of the National Foreign Intelligence Board
Chairman, National Intelligence Council
National Intelligence Officers

SUBJECT : Dissenting Positions in National Intelligence
Estimates and Memorandums [redacted]

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1. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidelines covering the format, the procedures for submission, and the content of dissenting positions in National Intelligence Estimates, Special National Intelligence Estimates, Interagency Intelligence Memorandums and Intelligence Alert Memorandums. I want to assure that all members of the NFIB have the fullest possible opportunity to present alternative judgments in those instances where they find they differ with the DCI's findings set forth in the main text of these estimative papers. Some recent NIE practice, however, indicates -- substance apart -- that there is a certain lack of order and clarity in the way we in NFIB are handling problems of dissent. For this reason, I forward this memorandum of guidance. [redacted]

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2. Dissenting views and alternative assessments are important factors in the process of preparing national intelligence; their clear communication to the consumer is essential. Current DCI policy requires that dissenting positions or alternative views appearing in national intelligence be given treatment equal to the main text in length, degree of detail, and rationale. National Intelligence Officers responsible for the preparation of national intelligence have been charged to assure that the text of an estimate and dissenting views clearly show the reasons each of the differing views is held. It is often the explanation of the differing views that will be of greatest value to the reader. [redacted]

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3. The guidelines below are not intended to circumscribe in any way the right of the NFIB members to dissent in NIEs but to assist the DCI in clearly communicating to policymakers the findings of the Intelligence Community on important foreign developments. [redacted]

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Attachment to
Memorandum for Holders-1 of
NFIB-14.2/8
30 September 1980

4. Format and Procedures

a. As has been standard practice throughout the history of NIEs, the main text of national intelligence issuances will contain the findings of the DCI. Dissents of members of the NFIB, including the CIA member, will appear in the same format as the findings of the main text. The DCI will not himself take dissenting opinions.

b. The specific format selected by the NIO and the dissenting agency representative will be fully coordinated during the drafting process. Whether the main text and dissenting positions are presented in separate paragraphs, separate sections, or annexes will depend on the nature and substance of the dissent, and will be determined through consultation between the NIO and representatives of the dissenting agency, on occasion, and with the consent of the agency concerned, the dissent of a single agency on a matter clearly secondary to the purpose of the estimate may be accommodated in a footnote. Footnotes may also be used when an agency wishes to reaffirm a dissenting position taken in an earlier estimate.

c. The production schedule for the estimate should provide sufficient time for staffing within agencies and for the identification of dissenting positions as early as possible after issuance of the first draft.

d. The NIO and agency representatives should agree on the texts of dissenting positions appearing in subsequent drafts of the estimate, which would be subject to later review and approval by dissenting NFIB principals.

e. Prior to the pre-NFIB meeting of representatives on the final draft of the estimate, agency representatives should obtain the preliminary reaction of their principals on the dissenting positions to appear in the estimate. As in the past, the final decisions on the main text and dissenting positions would be made during the deliberations of the NFIB on the estimate.

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5. Content

a. The NIOs and agencies participating in the production of national intelligence should share the responsibility for assuring that dissenting positions (1) address issues within the scope of the estimate, (2) parallel the main text in substance and degree of detail, and (3) convey clear supporting rationale for the dissenting view.

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Memorandum for Holders-1

NFIB-14.2/8

30 September 1980

b. The NIOs, acting for the DCI and working in conjunction with the dissenting agency or agencies, have the editing authority to insure that dissents do indeed parallel the main text in their format, coverage, and presentation; they do not have the authority to change the substantive thrust of the dissents, provided only that those dissents present evidence and analysis and do not attribute positions to the main text which the DCI neither states nor intends.

[redacted]

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6. There will be no counter-dissents. [redacted]

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7. These guidelines are intended to apply to national intelligence issuances prepared under scheduling procedures short of crash precedence. The handling of dissents will have to be adjusted under compressed procedures to produce national intelligence issuances on an urgent basis.

[redacted]

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8. Your cooperation in implementing these guidelines will be appreciated. [redacted]

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STANSFIELD TURNER

(18 September 1980)

~~The dissenting office drafts its own dissent~~

THE DRAFTING OF THE DISSENT IS LEFT ENTIRELY IN THE HANDS OF THE DISSENTING OFFICE. THE NID STAFF EDITS THEM WITH A LIGHT HAND.

THE NID STAFF ADVISES THE DISSENTING OFFICE THAT THE COMMENT SHOULD BE KEPT TO ONE PARAGRAPH. IF THE OFFICE WANTS TO PUBLISH A COUNTERPIECE, IT SHOULD DO SO IN ITS OWN PUBLICATIONS. THIS GUIDELINE IS NORMALLY HEEDED. THE NID OCCASIONALLY DOES PUBLISH DISSENTS OF MORE THAN ONE PARAGRAPH.

IF THE ~~DISSENTING~~ COMMENT IS POORLY PUT OR NOT TO THE POINT, A CALL MAY BE MADE TO A SOMEWHAT SENIOR LEVEL IN THE DISSENTING OFFICE TO ASK WHETHER THE COMMENT IS WHAT IS WANTED. EXPERIENCE INDICATES THAT IT FREQUENTLY IS USELESS TO TRY TO PROTECT AN OFFICE FROM REPRESENTING ITS VIEWS POORLY.

SO FAR, MISREPRESENTATION OF JUDGMENTS IN THE MAIN ARTICLE HAS NOT BEEN A PROBLEM IN DEALING WITH DRAFT DISSENTS. AUTHORS OF ARTICLES ARE GIVEN COPIES OF DISSENTS BEFORE THEY ARE PUBLISHED, TO GIVE THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO ADJUST THEIR OWN LANGUAGE AND TO ALLOW THEM TO NOTE ANY SUCH MISREPRESENTATION IN DISSENTING DRAFTS AND TO DEAL WITH IT.

REJOINDERS TO DISSENTS ARE NOT PERMITTED. THE AUTHOR OF THE ORIGINAL ARTICLE HAS NO CONTROL OVER THE LANGUAGE OF THE DISSENT.

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SSCI ANALYSIS AND PRODUCTION QUESTIONS

17 MARCH 1983

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QUESTION 7. To what degree does the NIE process foster competitive analysis? Can you cite specific examples?

ANSWER. We rely principally upon the rather elaborate NIE process itself to ensure the airing and consideration of competitive analyses in the course of producing our estimates. As the answers to earlier questions in this series have pointed out, many individuals and organizations get involved in weighing the evidence upon which each estimate is based. Many differing viewpoints on what that evidence means will be voiced during the estimate's consideration, and it is the rubbing of these ideas against each other throughout the process that guarantees that no one analyst's viewpoint will automatically prevail. Even though most drafts are written by one analyst, the review and coordination processes described above usually result in some if not a good many rather profound changes in the thrust of an estimate as the process unfolds. In the larger sense, then, the competitive analysis principle is the keystone of the national intelligence production process, and every estimate we do is done in accord with this principle.

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In addition, the NIC has taken a number of steps to increase the review of its work by both specialists and generalists who are outside the Community's regular estimative apparatus. The DCI's Senior Review Panel, a group of four distinguished senior officers with many years of experience in international relations, comments on every estimative Terms of Reference, Concept Paper, and first draft, frequently coming up with suggestions that we adopt for improving, expanding, or changing the exposition of a paper. And whenever possible we seek the reactions of CIA and embassy officers abroad to our drafts. To the degree that time permits, drafts are also reviewed by outside consultants -- individuals from the academic, business, and professional worlds who are among the country's most respected experts in their various fields.

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QUESTION 8. National Intelligence Estimates, Special National Intelligence Estimates, and Interagency Intelligence Memoranda seem to be the only publications of the Community which can focus policymaker attention on differences in analytic judgments among the various NFIP components.

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A. Do you seek a consensus in those documents, or do you encourage the airing of alternative views?

ANSWER. The whole point of the coordination process -- through which each NIE, SNIE, and IIM draft goes -- is to ensure that any analytical viewpoint that competes with or differs from the drafter's view gets a full hearing. Once heard, a differing view can (a) be persuasive enough to become the stated view of all; (b) be refuted persuasively enough to be dropped; or (c) be maintained, even

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though others disagree, and appear in the final estimate as a formal dissent. In practice, either (a) or (b) tends to happen more often than (c). Perhaps this is unfortunate, but it takes a good deal of extra effort -- and more than a little courage -- to stand by one's guns and articulate a viewpoint different than that being expressed by everyone else, particularly when the others seem to have more evidence or greater expertise on their side. We do our best to combat "groupthink" by trying to draw out differences of view when we find them and they they appear solidly based, but this admittedly is a difficult task and we accomplish it only imperfectly. []

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- B. Can you explain why most interagency estimates relating to non-Soviet subjects contain virtually no dissenting opinions?

There have in fact been dissenting opinions in some estimates on non-Soviet-related topics (e.g., [] a number of Central American issues, oil market prospects, North Korean attack plans, etc), but is certainly correct to say that dissents appear more often in Soviet-related estimates than in any others. We think this is because evidence on many Soviet matters is inherently indirect and circumstantial, while in most other parts of the world there is a larger component of directly verifiable -- and hence less arguable -- evidence. The fundamental importance of most Soviet issues for the US, moreover, as well as their operational implications for US policy, may lead agencies to dig in their heels in differences of judgment which they might be more inclined to soften in the case of less important areas. Then, too, some agencies devote the bulk of their analytic resources to coverage of Soviet affairs, putting them in a good position to take issue with others on these matters, but leaving them far less expert and less able to form independent judgments on other areas of the world. []

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In our Soviet estimates in particular, the increased sophistication and complexity of modern weapons systems and the long lead times required for their development have placed greater demands on intelligence for details of Soviet military policies and programs and longer-range forecasts. This has led to a considerable expansion in the number of discrete judgments called for in estimates on Soviet military matters -- and with it, an increase in the number of areas of potential disagreement. We also find that forecasts about Soviet policies and capabilities a decade or more in the future require intelligence judgments on matters about which the Soviets themselves have not decided, leaving room for considerable differences of view. []

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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

19 December 1984

National Intelligence Council

MEMORANDUM FOR: Intelligence Liaison Staff

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FROM: Harold P. Ford, NIO at Large
National Intelligence Council

SUBJECT: Dissents in National Estimates

1. Dissenting views in national estimates are drafted by the sponsoring NFIB agency, coordinated with the appropriate National Intelligence Officer (that is, the chairman of the particular NIE), and debated by Principals of the National Foreign Intelligence Board before final approval for inclusion in an estimate. Alternative views are not limited in length. They must, however, be confined to issues of some substance within the scope of the estimate, parallel the text in substance and degree of detail, and clearly convey the rationale supporting the dissent.

2. The language of dissenting views may be lightly edited by the National Intelligence Officer, acting for the Director of Central Intelligence, in order to insure that the view parallels the text in format, coverage, and presentation; and to establish that the dissent does not attribute positions to the estimate which it does not in fact include. National estimates do not contain counter-dissents.

Har P. Ford

Harold P. Ford

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